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ABSTRACT

The communications department at Lewis and Clark College (Portland, Oregon) has grown from two faculty with three declared communications majors in 1965 to six faculty with 135 declared majors in 1984. The department curriculum is subdivided into three central areas of study: rhetoric and public address, interpersonal/organizational communication, and mass media. Each area of the department has an associated set of activities and internships, and there is a separate theatre department. The communications department, which views communications as both a liberal arts/humane study and a career-oriented preprofessional field, seeks to integrate theory, research, and skills. Rhetoric and public address classes clearly fit the classical conception of the liberal arts and humane studies. Since the students in interpersonal communication classes are thinking, listening, evaluating, and learning constantly how to synthesize and integrate information from a variety of disciplines and subject areas and to apply the results to current problems, interpersonal communication also fits the mold of liberal arts. These same communication studies are also very much career oriented, preprofessional, or skill related, such as public speaking, organizational communication, and journalism and broadcast communication. Far from being purely skills courses, they are what Aristotle would have described as humane arts if taught from a research knowledge base and with perspective. (HTH)

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A Curriculum Model for a Small College Communication Department

Steve Hunt

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A Curriculum Model for a Small College Communication Department

Steve Hunt, Lewis & Clark College
October, 1983

No one curriculum model for a small college communications department can satisfy the needs of all small college communications departments. Each college speech communications department must tailor its own curriculum to meet the needs of its students, to fit the historic circumstances at its college, to blend with the rest of its college's curriculum, and to match the interests and strengths of those faculty teaching in the department. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of any small college speech communication curriculum and especially an analysis of that curriculum's justification can potentially be enlightening to those in other small college departments. With this thought in mind, I would like to present to this group Lewis & Clark College's communication curriculum and its rationale with the hopes that group members can take from this presentation those elements of the curriculum and/or its rationale peculiarly suitable to their own schools.

Lewis and Clark College is a small liberal arts college with about 1,700 undergraduate students. It is located in Portland, Oregon, a metropolitan area with approximately one million people. The college maintains a loose affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, but it is basically nonsectarian. The school has a few graduate programs and a law school but it considers itself to be, and is considered by most primarily

to be, an undergraduate liberal arts college. The school has about 120 undergraduate faculty organized into twenty departments and a few interdisciplinary studies units.

The Communications Department at Lewis & Clark has grown from two faculty with three declared Speech majors in 1964-65 to six faculty with 135 declared Communications majors in 1983-84. The department curriculum is subdivided into three central areas of study: Rhetoric and Public Address, Interpersonal/Organizational Communication, and Mass Media. In the Rhetoric and Public Address area are those courses often associated with a traditional speech department: Introduction to Public Speaking, Persuasion, Argumentation and Debate, Oral Interpretation, Rhetorical Criticism, American Public Address, Legal Communication, and Political Communication. In the Interpersonal/Organizational Communication area there are courses in: Introduction to Dyadic, Interpersonal and Organizational Communication, Small Group Communication, Language and Nonverbal Communication, Organizational Communication, Conflict Resolution, and Intercultural Communication. The Mass Media area at Lewis & Clark involves: Introduction to Mass Media, Radio and Video Production, Mass Media and Society, The Public Arts (a course in media aesthetics and criticism), History of American Journalism, Journalistic Writing and Editing, and Magazine and Feature Writing.

Each area of the department has an associated set of activities and internships. There is an active forensics

program associated with Rhetoric and Public Address. The college newspaper and radio station are associated with Mass Media. A number of internships and research activities affiliate themselves with the Interpersonal/Organizational Communications subdivision. In addition, the Communications Department requires of every major a course in Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodology. Majors must accumulate 60 quarter hours in Communications and are encouraged to take courses outside the major which complement and supplement the major or even to double major in Communications and Psychology, or History, or Business, or Political Science, or English, or whatever.

There is a separate Theatre Department at Lewis & Clark. Lewis & Clark has no speech therapy classes. Film courses are taught by adjunct faculty members on a rotating catch-as-catch-can basis. The Communications Department offers two sections of Introduction to Mass Media per year which usually enroll forty to fifty students each. Both Introduction to Public Speaking and Introduction to Dyadic, Interpersonal and Organizational Communication are offered in five to six sections per year with twenty to twenty-five students enrolled in each section. Communications majors are required to take all three introductory courses, the aforementioned research methods course, and at least one upper division course in each area in the department. Majors are free to elect the rest of their classes with the expectation that

they will get both some breadth and depth in Communications.

The Communications Department at Lewis & Clark views communications as both a liberal arts humane study and as a career oriented preprofessional field. Our expectation is that our majors will view communications as an independent discipline with its own unique perspective on "spoken symbolic interaction"[1] and as an integrative field which is partially a social science, partly a humane study, and sometimes a fine art. As we stated in our Communications Self Study in 1983:

> In many ways, Communications is a microcosm of the liberal arts. It is a humanity as demonstrated by its rhetoric and public address tradition closely associated with the study of history and the classically defined study of philosophy. It is a social science as demonstrated by the use of quantitative research methods and studies in interpersonal and organizational communication which are closely related to social psychology. It is a fine art as demonstrated in the performance areas of public speaking, oral interpretation of literature, radio, video, and film. It is a preprofessional discipline for fields such as law, business administration, journalism, broadcasting, advertising, and public relations. And finally, the Communications scholar employs the qualitative and quanitative methods of historian, literary critic, behavioral scientist, survey researcher, and ethnographic researcher.[2]

In our Communications Department we seek to integrate theory, research, and skills. We insist that communications is both a liberal arts humane study and a pragmatic career oriented study that can be justified on either ground, but is best argued for in both ways.

I shall first consider the liberal arts justification

for communication as with increased public pressures for excellence in education, and with the return of many schools to core curricula, many speech communication departments must remind themselves, their students, and their administrations of the long history and centrality of rhetoric, broadly conceived, to the liberal arts and humane studies. Cardinal John Henry Newman defined a liberal arts education as one "which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them."[3] Mark Van Doren proclaimed that a liberal education is focused on "learning the arts of investigation, discovery, criticism, and communication..."[4] Speech communication scholars have long argued that their discipline facilitates these goals. SCA President F.E.X. Dance recently said "Speech communication, the study of spoken language, is one of the foundations of a liberal education and is a basic requirement of all programs which intend to produce a liberally education humane and humane being."[5]

Speech scholars know that rhetoric was one of the trivium and at the core of liberal education for over two thousand years. But, beyond the rhetoric of rhetoric, what is it in the communications curriculum that contributes to a liberally educated humane person? Most critics agree that the liberally educated person has learned how to learn, can read and write, calculate, speak and listen, critically

evaluate, solve problems, is aware of history and culture, knows something of people and how they operate singly and in groups, and attempts to synthesize knowledge and bring perspective to bear as he or she critically evaluates any difficulty. The speech communication curriculum dovetails with this idealized portrait rather well. In Public Speaking, Persuasion, Argumentation and Debate, and Rhetorical Criticism the student learns how to use the library to research, how to find, weigh, and evaluate evidence, how to organize a constructive case, how to refute a case, how to listen and criticize, how to use spoken language to some purpose and the standards for evaluating others attempting to inform or persuade both historically and currently. The speech student is also constantly dealing with value judgments as they apply to the marketplace of ideas and the concepts of choice-making in politics, law, ethics, religion, et al., those areas in which Aristotle proclaimed that contingent wisdom must forever prevail.[6]

Rhetoric and Public Address and the classes taught in Rhetoric and Public Address clearly fit the classic conception of liberal arts and/or humane studies. What about classes in Interpersonal/Organizational Communications and Mass Media? How do they fit as liberal arts or humane studies? The answer is simple if we will but return to our basic communication models. Messages are carried through various mediums in various contexts from differing senders

to a variety of receivers. The astute student of the communication process very soon realizes that the psychology of message creation and the social psychology of message reception are acutely affected by medium and context. When one criticizes a historical speaker one of the keys to a decent criticism is the attempt to fit the speaker and the speech into its historical mileu. When one studies modern symbolic communication, one should also study context and medium. The dyad, the small group, the organization, and even the culture may much effect message content and meaning. The mode of symbolic expression is also very important though the medium may not be the whole message as Marshall McLuhan once argued. The student learns in interpersonal communication how people solve problems, think, and operate in groups and the key symbolic interactionism of verbal and nonverbal communication variables. In mass media classes, the student learns how society tries to control and effect the media and how, in turn, the media effect society. Students are thinking, listening, evaluating, and learning constantly how to synthesize and integrate information from a variety of disciplines and subject matters and apply the results to current problems. Is this not the essence of a liberal arts humane education?

Small group classes teach leadership, problem-solving, norms, communication patterns, etc. ad infinitum. Organiza-

tional communication classes discuss theories of leadership, interviewing techniques, patterns for organizing people, communication barriers, and message flow systems. Classes in Verbal and Nonverbal Behavior demonstrate various patterns of symbolic interaction. Mass Media and Society classes study the various modes of mass communication, the social patterns affecting the utilization of these modes, the ethics of the influence process, and means of social control or law effecting the media. Film and video aesthetics classes critique video and film utilizing many of the same tools that the rhetorical critic employs when criticizing a speech or speaker. In all these classes and in others in Interpersonal/Organizational Communication and in Mass Media, the students are taught to think, to research, and to evaluate in a cultural context what human beings do to live with other human beings and solve problems in society with one another focusing on messages delivered in various contexts through differing media. There is much to be said that all this is a liberating and humane study. Rhetoric and Public Address, Interpersonal/Organizational Communications, and even Mass Media Communication, are at the core of a liberal arts humanistic education traditionally and for modern times.

These same communication studies are also very much career oriented, preprofessional, or skill related. Some of our colleagues are loathe to admit to this as a narrow

view of the liberal arts eschews skill oriented practical studies. Pragmatic business related courses and job oriented classes in the narrow view should be the forte of the community college or the large university. But such a view falsely, I believe, dichotomizes liberal arts and pragmatic studies. In addition, it is not very realistic for, as Wallace Bacon so well put it, "unemployment and hunger can interfere mightily with meaningfulness and satisfaction."[7] Courses in Public Speaking, Interviewing, Organizational Communication, Radio and Television Production, Journalism, et al., can and do teach job related skills, but can also teach broad generic skills and can be taught from a research knowledge base.

The aforementioned Lewis & Clark Communications Self Study followed up on a number of our alumni. We found that communications graduates were doing a wide variety of things: some were working in publishing, some were involved with newspapers, quite a few were at radio, t.v., or cable stations, some were in advertising and public relations, a few were in teaching, a number had gone on to law school, two or three were in the ministry, quite a few were in sales or personnel in businesses, some held political office, etc. Almost all were distinctly satisfied with their communications background and felt they used some of the skills they had learned in their jobs. They mentioned public speaking skills, interviewing skills, research

skills, interpersonal skills, et al., much in the same way as did the graduates of Iowa State in Sorenson and Pearson's study[8] or the graduates in Lanna Hage Greenberg's study.[9] What these graduates related to were broad generic skills rather than specific technical skills. If English teaches writing, Mathematics teaches calculating, Computer Science trains students in the use of machines, why can't Communications teach listening, speaking, group cooperation and problem solving techniques, journalistic writing, interviewing, debate, et al.?

And these courses are not purely skills courses. They are what Aristotle would have described as humane arts if taught from a research knowledge base and with perspective. Public speaking includes the theory of how to research, organize, and support a good speech, how to analyze an audience, and how to listen to and evaluate a speech. Good journalism trains its students in research and interviewing, analyzing and evaluating, ethics and the law, rather than in mere journalistic writing per se. A good radio-television production course works at the whys of production and the evaluative criteria for good production as hard as at the how to of production. Communication courses at Lewis & Clark, and in most small colleges, combine theory and practice, research and skills, knowledge and experience. We are not ashamed, but proud, that our graduates like this admixture and utilize what they have learned to

get jobs and to work successfully at their jobs thereafter.

To summarize, I have presented this group with Lewis & Clark's communication curriculum. It is a fairly basic curriculum meant for a small department in a liberal arts college. Traditional speech courses are located in our division of Rhetoric and Public Address. In addition, we have an Interpersonal/Organizational division and a Mass Media division. We divide our curriculum into separate sectors, but we attempt to integrate a holistic view of communication studies. We think Communications is almost a microcosm of the liberal arts as a humanity, social science, and fine art. We think it is defensible both as a liberal arts humane study and as a pragmatic skills oriented preprofessional field. As a liberal arts/humane study, communications deals with critical thinking, speaking and listening, getting along with people, evaluating and critiquing, and problem solving. Communications has a long and distinguished tradition in rhetoric, and interpersonal/organizational communication and mass media additions to the communications curriculum merely expand our vision of messages being created and sent through various media in differing contexts. Of course, communications also deals with skills which can be very pragmatic and job related. However, when communications courses are taught from a knowledge research base, they are not pure skills courses. They integrate knowledge and theory in

application. Generic skills are good for liberal arts graduates and always have been. "Liberal education today, and in the future, cannot be what it once was--and never was what some persons of the present age have perceived it to be."[10] As a liberal art or as a preprofessional field, or better yet as both, communications belongs at the center of the small liberal arts college.

Endnotes

1. Kibler and Barker, eds., Conceptual Frontiers of Speech Communication. NY: SCA, 1969, p. 18.

2. Communications Department Self Study, Lewis & Clark College, 1983, p. 3.

3. John Henry Cardinal Newman, The Idea of a University. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1927, p. 197.

4. Mark Van Doren, Liberal Education. NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1943, p. 144.

5. Frank E.X. Dance, "Speech Communication as a Liberal Arts Discipline," Communication Education, Sept., 1980, p. 331.

6. Aristotle, Topics I, ch. 1: 100b, 23, 24.

7. Wallace Bacon, "Higher Education and Speech Communication: The Next Decade." Southern States Speech Journal, Fall, 1977, p. 14.

8. Alumni Perspectives on Speech Communication Training: Implications for Communications Faculty. Communication Education, July, 1981, pp. 299-304.

9. Lanna Hage Greenberg, "The Liberal Arts Employer Survey: Opportunities for the Liberal Arts Graduate." Midwest College Placement Association, August, 1979, p. 17, reprinted in ACA Bulletin, January, 1982, p. 11. p. 11.

10. Earl J. McGrath, Paul Dressel, and Lewis B. Mayhew, The Liberal Arts as Viewed by Faculty Members in Professional Schools. NY: Columbia University Press, 1960, pp. 1-2.

Department of Communications Curriculum
(To become effective Fall term, 1981-82)

Organizational/Interpersonal	Rhetoric and Public Address	Mass Media
101, Intro. to Dyadic, Group and Organizational Communication	102, Intro. to Public Speaking	103, Intro. to Mass Media
240, Small Group Behavior	201, 211, 221 Public Advocacy Activity	202, 212, 222 Radio KLC Activity
245, Persuasive Communication	220, Argumentation and Advocacy	204, 214, 224 Pioneer Log Activi
310, Communication and Conflict	230, Oral Interpretation of Literature	205, 215, 225, Broadcast Product Activity
320, Survey of Organizational Communication	235, Historical Perspectives in Communication	208, 218, 228 Yearbook Activity
330, Language and Nonverbal Behavior	304, American Rhetoric	250, Public Arts
GS 497, Sex Roles and Communication	334, Advanced Oral Interpretation of Literature	255, Writing for the Mass Media
	354, Legal Communication	270, Intro. to Radio and Television Production
	356, Rhetoric of Women	280, News Reporting
	GS 497, Contemporary Women: Issues and Rhetoric	322, Mass Media and Society
	GS 497, Rhetoric of Political Campaigns	324, Advanced Radio Production
		325, Advanced Television Product
		326, The Writer's Market
		360, History of American Journali

Methodology Courses:	260, Quantitative Methods in Communication Research
	265, Qualitative Methods in Communication Research
Practicum:	244, 444
Independent Study:	299, 499
Senior Honors:	400
Special Studies Seminars:	298, 498